

CLAIMS:

1. A product information distribution system comprising:
 - a database having records of user purchasable products, each said record including fields for at least identification and geographical availability of said product,
 - an input means for receiving input data from a user related to a preferred product which is selected from one of said product identification fields of said records, a distance value and a preferred geographical location from which said preferred product is to be sourced,
 - searching means for searching said database according to said input data and for determining a search result, said search result relating to those of said records including products meeting said product identification fields and available within a boundary determined by said distance value of said preferred geographical location, and
 - an output display means for displaying said search result to said user.
2. A product information distribution system as claimed in claim 1, wherein said preferred geographical location is a co-ordinate value and said boundary is determined by a radius thereabouts corresponding with said distance value.
3. A product information distribution system as claimed in claim 1, wherein said geographical location is in longitudinal and latitudinal form.
4. A product information distribution system as claimed in claim 1, wherein each said record of user purchasable products further includes at least one product attribute field and said input data is further related to said product attribute field.
5. A product information distribution system as claimed in claim 4, wherein said search result can be sorted by the user on the basis of said product attribute field.

6. A product information distribution system as claimed in claim 1, wherein each said record of user purchasable products further includes a pricing field and said input data is further related to said pricing field.

7. A product information distribution system as claimed in claim 6, wherein said search result can be sorted by the user on the basis of said pricing field.

8. A product information distribution system as claimed in claim 1, wherein said database and said searching means is accessible over the Internet by a user of said input means.

9. A product information distribution system as claimed in claim 1 wherein said search result can be sorted by the user on the basis of said distance value.

10. A computerised system comprising:
an input means for receiving input data including a user-selected market entity, a reference geographical location, and a maximum deviation from said reference geographical location,

an output means for displaying information to the user, and

a memory means including an executable user-interface program for operatively controlling said input means and said output means, a database of records including an identity and geographical availability for each of a plurality of market entities, and an executable searching program for searching said database for records that correlate with said input data and for enabling said records that correlate to be displayed as information on said output means.

11. A system as claimed in claim 10, wherein said database of records further includes current pricing information for each of said plurality of market entities, said current pricing information being outputted from a temporal test program being executed prior to an execution of said searching program.

12. A system as claimed in claim 11, wherein said database of records further includes temporally independent pricing information for each of said plurality of market entities, said temporally independent pricing information being inputted to said temporal test program and being transparent to said searching program.

13. A system as claimed in claim 12, wherein said temporally independent pricing information is accessible by said suppliers of said of the user purchasable products.

14. A method of facilitating Internet-assisted commerce, said method comprising the steps of:

collecting a plurality of retailer related records, each of said retailer related records including a product code, and a related geographical availability in longitudinal and latitudinal form,

storing said plurality of retailer related records in searchable form,

providing a means for selectively retrieving one or more particular retailer related records based upon a user entered product code and a maximum allowed deviation from said geographical availability.

15. A system for distributing information related to user purchasable products, said system comprising:

a database of records including fields related to identification, pricing, characterisation and geographical availability of a plurality of user purchasable products, said records also including fields related to a plurality of suppliers of the user purchasable products,

input means for receiving user input data related to at least a desired characterisation and geographical availability of a desired user purchasable product,

searching means for searching said database on the basis of said user input data and for determining a search result, said search result having records including said fields related to identification, pricing and supplier, and

an output display means for displaying said search result.

16. A system as claimed in claim 15, wherein said fields relating to pricing are associated with a temporary storage element, the data within which is periodically checked according to temporal statement and if said check is true, then said data is loaded into said associated field related to pricing.

17. A system as claimed in claim 16, wherein an authorised supplier can access one or more temporary storage elements.

18. A computerised method of distributing product information, said method comprising the steps of:

tendering a plurality of product types, for selection of one desired product type by a user,

tendering a plurality of product sub-types on the basis of the selected product type, for selection of one desired product type by the user,

tendering at least one or more relevant characterising product attributes, on the basis of the selected product type, for selection of one or more attribute preferences by the user,

obtaining geographical data related to an acceptable geographical purchasing area by the user, and

returning any of a plurality of pre-stored data records which correlate to all of said selections and said acceptable geographical purchasing area.

19. A method of dynamically constructing a searchable index of valid identifiers, said method comprising the steps of:

(i) prompting a user for an initial word;

(ii) building a set of possible valid identifiers based on said initial word and previously mapped relationships with respect to said initial word;

(iii) displaying said set for selection by the user,

(iv) adding the initial word to a list of unmatched words, prompting the user for a new initial word and repeating from step (ii), if a selection from said set has not been made by the user;

(v) providing a further mapped relationship for each of said list of unmatched words with a selected valid identifier, if a selection from said set is made by the user.

20. A method of facilitating Internet-assisted commerce as claimed in claim 14, wherein the user entered product code is taken from a searchable index of valid identifiers dynamically constructed with the steps of:

- (i) prompting a user for an initial word;
- (ii) building a set of possible valid identifiers based on said initial word and previously mapped relationships with respect to said initial word;
- (iii) displaying said set for selection by the user,
- (iv) adding the initial word to a list of unmatched words, prompting the user for a new initial word and repeating from step (ii), if a selection from said set has not been made by the user;

(v) providing a further mapped relationship for each of said list of unmatched words with a selected valid identifier, if a selection from said set is made by the user.

21. An indexing system comprising:

means for obtaining an initial word of interest;

a database for storing words and any related alternative words, each of said stored words being searchable on the basis of a mapped relationship with the initial word of interest; and

means for mapping and storing newly related words to said database where a search of the database cannot determine a mapped relationship with the initial word of interest.

22. A method for classifying information related to a plurality of identified entities, said method comprising the steps of:

creating a uniquely identifiable record of information related to each of said entities;

determining a rule for tagging each of said records, said rule including assignment of at least two related and independently interpretable indexable tags for each of said records; and

searching for one or more of said indexable tags on the basis of desired values of
5 said indexable tags.

23. A method as claimed in claim 22, wherein at least one of said indexable tags relates to an attribute of said entity.

10 24. A method as claimed in claim 23, wherein at least one of said indexable tags relates to an identification type of said entity.

25. A method as claimed in claim 24, wherein a common rule is determined for entities having a common identity type.

15 26. A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein said distance value is entered by said user.

20 27. A computerised system as claimed in claim 10, wherein said maximum deviation is user-selected.

28. A computerised system as claimed in claim 27, wherein said reference geographical location user-selected.

25 29. A method of facilitating Internet-assisted commerce as claimed in claim 14, wherein said maximum allowed deviation is user entered.

30 30. A computerised method of distributing product information as claimed in claim 18, wherein said geographical data related to an acceptable geographical purchasing area by the user, is obtained by user selection.

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31. A method as claimed in claim 25, wherein said entities are market entities comprising at least one selected from the group consisting of consumer products, organisations, services, people, documents and media.

5 32. A method of enabling a query to be performed on a database holding records of information related to marketable entities, said method comprising the steps of:
receiving data related to a desired type of market entity,
determining one or more searchable attribute fields of relevance to the desired product type, and
10 generating a query form having data entry fields for each of said determined searchable attribute fields, said query form being arranged for entry of value data by a user of the database.

15 33. A method as claimed in claim 32, further comprising the steps of:
receiving value data from at least one of said data entry fields on said query form having been filled by a user of the database, and
executing a corresponding query on the records of the database.

20 34. A method for classifying and subsequently retrieving product related information, said method comprising the steps of:
displaying a product pick list to an intending consumer,
receiving a product selection from said product pick list from the intending consumer,
determining a set of attribute fields associated with said product selection,
25 displaying an attribute field pick list to the intending consumer,
receiving an attribute field selection and a value for one or more of said attribute fields,
determining product related information in accordance with said received selection and value, and
30 displaying said product relation information.

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35. A method of generating and providing an instruction for querying a database holding records of information related to marketable entities, said method comprising the steps of:

keying a command as an input text message into a wireless mobile device;
incorporating context data into said message to form said instruction; and
forwarding said instruction to said database.

36. A method as claimed in claim 35, wherein the mobile device is a mobile telephone handset and at least said message is formed according to SMS protocol.

37. A method as claimed in claim 35 or 36, wherein said context data is keyed into said mobile device.

38. A method as claimed in claim 37, wherein said context data is related to a physical location.

39. A method as claimed in claim 35 or 36, wherein said context data is automatically incorporated into said message.

40. A method as claimed in claim 39, wherein said context data is selected from the group consisting of: physical location, user telephone number, and a time of day.

41. A method as claimed in claim 36, further comprising the substep of converting the message from SMS format to HTML format to form said instruction.

42. A system for distributing information to consumers related to market entities, said system comprising:

input means for receiving input query information from a consumer related to a preferred market entity;

adjustment means for adjusting said input query information with one or more instances of context information to create input data;

searching means for searching a database of records for matches that correlate with said input data,

output means for outputting said matches, and

a wireless communication path for communicating said input query information or said input data between said input means and said searching means via said adjustment means.

43. A system as claimed in claim 42, wherein said wireless communication path includes the use of SMS protocol.

44. A system for distributing information as claimed in claim 42 or 43, wherein said context information is selected from the group consisting of geographical location data, user telephone number and a time of day.

45. An apparatus for converting a text message into an instruction for querying a database, said apparatus comprising:

receiving means for receiving a text message having originated from a mobile hand held user operable device, said receiving means further for receiving a context parameter associated with the text message; and

converting means for converting the text message and the context parameter, into an instruction for querying a database.

46. An apparatus as claimed in claim 45, wherein the text message comprises at least a query component and said context parameter is entered by the user as a further component of the text message.

47. An apparatus as claimed in claim 45, wherein the context parameter is automatically generated by the user operable device and forwarded to the receiving means.

48. An apparatus as claimed in claim 47, wherein the automatically generated context parameter relates to one or more selected from the group consisting of: physical location, user telephone number, and a time of day.

49. An apparatus as claimed in claim 45, wherein the context parameter is generated at said apparatus.

50. An apparatus as claimed in claim 45, wherein said converting means converts at least said text message from SMS format to HTML format.

51. A method of preparing a command for inputting to a digital computer, said method comprising the steps of:

- (a) receiving and storing an input character;
- (b) scanning a set of valid abbreviations for a match with said character;
- (c) repeating steps (i) and (ii) until a match is found;
- (d) correlating said match with a keyword and constructing said command including at least said keyword; and
- (e) transmitting said command over a wireless network to the digital computer.

52. A product information distribution system as claimed in claim 1, wherein said input data includes a time of day value and said search result includes including records matching said time of day value.

53. A computerised system comprising:
an input means for receiving input data including a user-selected market entity, at least one reference geographical location, and a time of day;
an output means for displaying information to the user, and
server means including an executable user-interface program for operatively controlling said input means and said output means, a database of records including an identity and geographical availability for each of a plurality of market entities, and an executable searching program for searching said database for records that correlate with

said input data and for enabling said records that correlate to be displayed as information on said output means.

54. A method of defining a geographical area for computerised searching of
5 market entities, said method comprising the steps of:
defining a pair of geographical reference locations;
determining a distance value being greater than a linear distance between said
pair of geographical reference locations; and
defining said geographical area by applying a rule that excludes entities that have
10 a sum of a distance to each of said reference locations being greater than said distance
value.

55. A method as claimed in claim 54, wherein said distance value is less
than twice the value of the linear distance.

56. A product information distribution system comprising:
a database having a record for each of a plurality of user purchasable products,
each said record including fields for at least identification and geographical availability of
said corresponding product,

10 input means for receiving input data from a user related to a preferred product
which is selected from one of said product identification fields of said records, a distance
value and two user input geographical locations from between which said preferred
product is to be sourced,

searching means for searching said database according to said input data and for
25 determining a search result, said search result relating to those of said records including
products meeting said product identification fields and available within a boundary
determined by the method according to claim 38, and

an output means for displaying said search result to said user.

57. A method of identifying entities of interest according to their
30 geographical location, said method comprising the steps of:
defining at least two geographical reference locations;

determining a geocell enclosing said at least two reference locations;
determining an elliptically shaped region being within said geocell and including
each of said at least two locations; and
identifying entities of interest from within said region.

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